



Economic Development Committee

Town Hall · 40 Center Street · Fairhaven, MA 02719

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

PLACE OF MEETING: Town Hall for Members and remotely via Zoom for the Public
DATE AND TIME: Thursday September 16, 2021 at 6:30PM
MEETING TYPE: Economic Development Committee

Quorum and Attendance:

Present: Kevin McLaughlin, Chair; Eddie Lopez; Travis Rapoza; Cathy Melanson; Jessica Fidalgo and Bob Espindola.

Mr. McLaughlin called meeting to order, reviewed attendance for a quorum, and read the open meeting law for the record.

Review and Approve minutes of August 19, 2021 meeting

Mr. Foley forwarded the minutes from the August 19, 2021 meeting. Mr. Rapoza made a motion to approve and was seconded by Ms. Fidalgo; vote was unanimous with one abstention. Ms. Melanson abstained (5-0).

Union Wharf Feasibility Study Proposal Update

Mr. McLaughlin shared that Mr. Foley circulated the letter from FXM Associates regarding the Union Wharf Study. If anyone has any comments, Mr. Foley will address.

Mr. Foley presented the study to the Planning Board and would like to incorporate the Board's input. He shared the proposal to the Marine Resources Committee looking for their contribution. Once comments are addressed, Mr. Foley will notify the consultant to begin.

Mr. McLaughlin felt the proposal was comprehensive and covered all bases on data they will gather. Mr. McLaughlin suggests they select one or two people who are outside the waterfront area should be included in their interviews. This would allow for greater diversity and perspective.

Mr. Foley concurred and mentioned he has consulted with Frank Mahady, owner of FXM Associates. They are looking to interview users of the wharf and other maritime users nearby such as Fairhaven Shipyard, Northeast Maritime, and others in the area. They will put the word out for suggestions to those in the town that are knowledgeable and/or stakeholders.

Mr. Espindola asked Mr. McLaughlin if he is thinking of any particular representation within the community to interview and mentioned indirect industries that may support fisheries and the shipyard could be another category to reach out to. There may be some indirect companies that are not as obvious. He suggested suppliers to the fishing industry who have economically benefited from dredging the harbor. For example, companies that

supply gear, fuel, anything that supports fishing industry may benefit. Mr. McLaughlin added fishing boat owners to the list. Mr. Foley agreed that the more people we talk to, the better.

Action: Mr. Foley will incorporate the discussion from this meeting into the proposal.

Mr. McLaughlin brought up the New Bedford Port Authority. The Town has had discussions with them in the past. It was brought up that Fairhaven should have a permanent representative on the Port Authority but the Authority would want to control some part of the Fairhaven waterfront.

Action: Mr. Foley will look into interviewing someone from the NB Port Authority to discuss further. He will be working with them over the next year on the Harbor Plan. The Harbor Plan is 11 years old and has been extended numerous times. An updated plan is expected in the next year or so.

Mr. Espindola mentioned the federal study on the emerging Blue Economy, conducted by UMass Dartmouth. There was a grant for \$600K to study the waterfront area from Fall River to Woods Hole.

Mr. Foley said he was aware of the study and suggested to them that they add Northeast Maritime in Fairhaven to the list with Woods Hole and Mass Maritime as educational centers in the study area. He believes the maritime education sector is one area that has great potential to expand in Fairhaven.

Mr. Espindola wondered if we can look into marketing for certain technology development, including marine and submarine research, since we are in a prime location. We should inquire with FXM to look into the University's study.

Mr. Foley mentioned the multi-use building potential. At the Marine Resources several suggestions were made including fish markets, research and education. The study also includes ways to maximize parking. This may involve demarcating spots. There was also some discussion of the parcel swap that was voted on several years ago in order to make the property whole. A couple members of Marine Resources were not happy with the swap.

Mr. Foley spoke of optimizing the economy on the Wharf. There is an opportunity to diversify the economy through education and research, but land is limited. Some people have mentioned restaurants but they are only allowed in a very limited way if they pertain to the fisheries.

Mr. McLaughlin opens questions/comments to remote participants.

Mr. Espindola made a motion for the Committee to endorse the feasibility study proposal with the before mentioned comments and the motion was seconded Mr. Rapoza. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

Mr. Foley confirmed that it would take 12-14 weeks from the day we finalize our proposal with FXM Associates for them to produce the final report.

RT. 6/240/Opportunity Zone Redevelopment Study Town Planner Update

Mr. Foley gave a brief update on the study. The town received a grant from the Site Readiness program, administered by MassDevelopment. Its aim is to look at properties in the Route 6/240 redevelopment area. A matrix was developed from a scoring table based on the data. The town has hired Fuss & O'Neill, a Civil, Transportation and Environmental Engineering firm as the consultant on the study. Through this grant for \$75K, they will be able to do 10, phase 1 environmental assessments. Our next focus will be getting these assessments

approved. Phase 1 studies include a desktop study, historical data, and site access. From there they will determine which sites need more in-depth assessments. 3 to 4 properties will be eligible for further assessments as outlined in the grant.

Mr. Foley, Fuss & O'Neill and the former executive secretary to the town selectmen, Jeffrey Osuch, will visit a town owned site. Mr. Osuch was head of the DPW and is an engineer. He spearheaded efforts to reclaim the landfill, advising the separation of compostable items to increase space and line the bottom to prevent groundwater contamination. He also proposed charging other towns for garbage they bring in by refilling the landfill once the estimated 1/3 of materials such as stumps that do not have to be in a landfill were removed. However, the 10-year plan was stopped after a year due to some rule changes and other setbacks. Mr. Osuch is very familiar with properties in the vicinity including in 194-200 Bridge Street.

The transfer facility located in back of the sewage treatment plant must be relocated for the treatment plant to expand. Public safety is looking into various properties where they can expand. Transmission wires that cut through this property are not suitable for many other uses, and the town continues to look into these other locations. For example, the drive-in property has been empty for years and it may be helpful to speak to the owners and see if they would be willing to participate and try to get that property back into play. Mr. Foley is still in the process of contacting additional property owners.

Any other business reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the posting of this meeting

Next Meeting:

The Next Meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 21, 2021.

Ms. Fidalgo made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ms. Melanson. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).